

TRANSPORTATION

WE ENVISION...

...A city in which older residents can safely travel where they want and need to go.

WE HEARD...

- Public transportation is an asset, but some older adults struggle with access.
- 22% of survey respondents are dissatisfied with the affordability of public transportation.
- Older residents value Boston's walkability, but walking conditions could be improved.

- 30% of survey respondents are dissatisfied with the availability of maintained sidewalks.
- Older residents want more options for travel, and need more information about options that already exist.

Survey results suggest a lack of knowledge about transportation resources. For example, one-third to one-half of respondents gave "neutral" responses to questions about van rides or other senior transportation options and volunteer driver programs, respectively.



WE HEARD:

“I wish there were a better way for seniors to feel independent without a car. I fear giving up driving because I still want to be able to leave the house whenever I please. Finding other options is very confusing and difficult.”

- BOSTON RESIDENT

“As a Bostonian, the city serves us well. The Elderly Commission’s programs and services are helpful, especially the taxi coupons for which the monthly allotment should be increased.”

- BOSTON RESIDENT

“We need to focus on street crossings, light timing and coordination. There are many streets that are confusing or dangerous, where and when to cross is not clear. The time allowed, at crosswalks, is not sufficient for the distance needed to cross.”

- BOSTON RESIDENT

WE ARE...

The City of Boston is committed to streets that work for everyone, whether you're walking, cycling or driving. Boston adopted Complete Streets design principles as published in city's [Complete Streets](#) Guidelines. Complete streets aims to improve quality of life in Boston by creating streets that are both great public spaces and sustainable, multimodal transportation networks, embracing innovation to address climate change and promote healthy living. The City recently released its Transportation action plan, [GoBoston 2030](#), and the [Vision Zero](#) action plan. Through Vision Zero, improvements are being made to busy streets and intersections, such as Massachusetts Avenue. The Commission participated on the interdepartmental task force for both plans, bringing an aging perspective to the table, and engaged older adults in opportunities for community input during the planning processes.

Accessibility and Transportation Options

The City, through the Elderly Commission, runs the Senior Shuttle, a transportation option providing over 38,000 rides to older Boston residents every year. The City is committed to investing in accessible, energy-efficient vehicles. Since 2014, the Commission has added 10 wheelchair-accessible vehicles, making a total of 14 accessible shuttles out of a fleet of 27.

KEYWORDS

THE RIDE: A state funded service that provides door-to door, shared ride, transportation to eligible individuals who cannot use fixed-route public transit because of physical, cognitive or mental disability.

SENIOR SHUTTLE: Free shared-ride transportation service provided by the City of Boston through the Elderly Commission. Provides door-to door trips to medical appointments, food shopping or recreational activities within the City of Boston.

VISION ZERO: A public initiative committed to eliminating fatal traffic crashes in Boston by 2030.

WALKBOSTON: Nonprofit pedestrian advocacy organization dedicated to improving walking conditions in cities and towns in Massachusetts.

COMPLETE STREETS: A transportation policy and design approach that requires streets to be planned, designed, operated, and maintained to enable safe, convenient and comfortable travel and access for users of all ages and abilities regardless of their mode of transportation.

Safety for Pedestrians

Through Vision Zero, the City is making many improvements to pedestrian safety including identifying problematic intersections that threaten safety of pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists through the Department of Transportation: a "Safety Concerns Map." Some improvements for pedestrians include: revised signal timing policies to include more Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPI) in all signals that are concurrent in downtown Boston, solar-powered speed boards placed around the city to create awareness and slow drivers, and the installation of automatic walk signals instead of push button signals. The default speed limit has been lowered to 25/MPH, and a [Neighborhood Slow Streets](#) program has been established for implementation in 2017. A "Rapid Response Team," a multi-disciplinary, multi-agency group, was created to analyze crashes and recommend appropriate street design changes, community outreach and judicial and legislative follow-up. Seven rapid implementation projects are underway in locations where there have been fatal crashes. Finally, the City is partnering with WalkBoston to study [age-friendly walking](#) in three pilot areas in Boston neighborhoods--Mattapan Square, East Boston and the South End--and make improvements in the walking environment for older adults, including lighting at night.

KEYWORDS:

NEIGHBORHOOD SLOW STREETS: New mechanism for creating traffic-calming measures. Focused on reducing the number and severity of crashes on residential streets, lessen the impact of cut-through traffic on Boston's neighborhoods.

LEADING PEDESTRIAN INTERVAL (LPI): Typically gives pedestrians a 3-7 second head start when entering an intersection.

WHAT PROMOTES AGE-FRIENDLY WALKING? Funded by a Tufts Health Plan Foundation grant, WalkBoston has been working in collaboration with the Elderly Commission and other city departments to develop a system to address walkability for seniors. When determining whether a neighborhood is walkable for older adults, factors under consideration are: sidewalk conditions, sidewalk maintenance, ADA compliance, benches, lighting, shade, public restrooms, traffic speed, signal timing, street crossing distance, as well other things such as places to walk to for basic necessities.

WE WILL....

Recommendation #1:

Optimize publicly-funded transportation options for older adults in Boston.

- **Action Item A:** We will improve and expand the Elderly Commission’s partnership with the MBTA to better serve older adults in Boston.
- **Action Item B:** We will advocate to maintain the MBTA/RIDE coverage area and affordability.
- **Action Item C:** We will modernize and increase the efficiency of the senior shuttle including the purchase of additional new, accessible, energy-efficient vans. We will explore potential service changes including hours and days of operation and expanding types of rides.

Recommendation #2:

Optimize private transportation options for older adults.

- **Action Item A:** We will assess current training capacity of taxi and ride share companies, for serving people with disabilities or mobility limitations. We will explore the possibility of creating an “age-friendly” driver certification program.

Recommendation #3:

Improve older adults’ knowledge of and access to transportation options

- **(E) Action Item A:** We will educate older adults about ways to access public and private transportation options, including ways to access discounted rates and passes as well as travel training opportunities.

- **Action Item B:** We will publicize the taxi coupon program as a means of promoting travel options for older adults.
- **(E) Action Item C:** We will partner with the MBTA to expand access to the Senior CharlieCard.

Recommendation #4: Improve pedestrian safety in partnership with Vision Zero.

- **Action Item A:** We will support strategies of Go Boston: 2030 and Vision Zero to regulate new city speed limits and neighborhood “Slow Zones.”
- **Action Item B:** We will employ a comprehensive, age-friendly strategy when re-designing public spaces near high concentrations of older adults. This includes addressing sidewalks, crosswalks, signal timing, pedestrian ramps, places to rest, and shade.
- **Action Item C:** We will expand the use of audible crosswalk signals and longer walk times.
- **Action Item D:** Working in accordance with the City’s Sidewalk Maintenance Plan, we will explore age-friendly strategies for repairing sidewalks, including using materials and surfaces that are more easily managed by pedestrians, especially those with mobility challenges, and those who use wheelchairs or walkers.

